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A SUMMER EVENING TALE.

'I TELL you, I am uneasy about the girl, and cannot help my forebodings.'

Lady Elderton was speaking of her grandchild, and addressing her daughter, the mother.

'But, dear mother,' replied Mrs Dudley, 'what is it you have observed about Isabel? You know she never was such a merry chatterbox as Lotty.'

'Exactly so. And those quiet, reserved, sentimental girls are always the ones most open to the danger I am apprehending. I do not like the listless fits of reverie, and the absence of mind about trifles, which I have observed lately. I believe I shall have to relate my early experiences at the first suitable opportunity.'

'Will you, dear mother?' exclaimed Mrs Dudley joyfully—'will you really once more recite the story of your youth, that your grand-daughters may profit by it? But oh, I fear the recollection is painful!'

'That may be. But once in a dozen years or so, I am constrained, like the Ancient Mariner, to tell my tale; and the mood is on me to-night.'

Lady Elderton was not only a stately dame, but a beautiful woman, with the rare peculiar beauty that sometimes lingers round the sixtieth year. Tall and upright, she had the easy grace of walk and gesture that belonged to the well-bred people of her generation, who, it might be said, emulated the glide of the swan rather than the strut of the peacock. Across her forehead and down her cheeks, thick braids of hair revealed how richly her tresses were streaked with silver. Not for their weight in gold and jewels would she have had them otherwise. Her sense of the real fitness of things was too keen for her to have any doubt that nature, in thus touching her hair, had been a kindly beautifier. Nor did she wish for any deeper tint on her cheeks, or fairer bloom of skin, than became her autumn season.

Hardly had Lady Elderton finished her remarks, when the object of them—Isabel Dudley and her sister Charlotte—were seen in the dim twilight crossing the lawn, and the next minute they stepped under the verandah, and entered the drawing-room.

'Shall I ring for the lamp to be lighted?' asked Lotty, who was ever the thoughtful aid of her invalid mother.

'Not yet, my dear,' said Mrs Dudley. 'I am watching the moon coming up behind the trees, and I think we need not shut out its glory this lovely summer night.'

'I like talking in the twilight,' observed Lady Elderton.

'Do you?' exclaimed Lotty. 'Then do tell us something about old-fashioned times. It must have been so funny, and yet so slow, when there were no railroads.'

'If I tell you a story,' replied Lady Elderton, 'it will certainly have nothing to do with railroads; yet it shall be something of real life. However, I shall not detain you with moralisings, but at once begin my tale, if I may call it so;' and her ladyship accordingly commenced.

'I think you know I was an only child—an heiress, in fact; but let that pass. Honestly, I may say that my parents thought only of wealth as a stewardship. They had weaknesses of pride; but the pride of ancestry, of the brave men and virtuous women, whose honour in some sort they shared, and felt bound to keep untarnished. That they were fastidious in their choice of friends, and kept a good deal aloof from what is called general society, is quite true; but this reserve did not arise from vulgar pride. Half a century ago, irreligion was more open, and frivolity more frivolous, than they are at the present day. The coarse language and manners of an earlier period had not yet disappeared, even among what are called the higher classes.

'My mother had much about her of what would now be called the Puritan type; and she had a womanly intolerance for those who differed from her in opinion. Happily, she and my father were one on all great questions; and this might well be the case, as, with love's devotion, she had modelled her mind—perhaps unconsciously—on his. Yet he, as became the man, had wider views than she ever entertained. In his youth, he had travelled; and youthful travelling opens out rivers of thought,

that must fertilise any but the most arid minds ; whereas, my mother had been the stay-at-home English gentlewoman, whose migrations had been from Yorkshire to London, varied by sea-bathing at Scarborough, or drinking the waters at Harrogate. A gentle, happy soul was hers, that had always been sheltered and guided by love, and remained singularly ignorant of what is called "the world and its ways;" but something was there in my life or my nature that made me feel, ay, and acknowledge to myself in very girlhood, that I was self-willed and independent, with strong desires and a warm temper ; and that never, never should I be as meek, and gentle, and confidently obedient to authority as my dear mother was. And yet it is a fact that her very gentleness awed me. It would have seemed mean as well as undutiful to obstinately thwart her ; and meanness was not a Percival fault, whatever pride might be. On the whole, up to nearly seventeen years of age, I flattered myself that I was a very good daughter, not taking into account that I had never met with a strong temptation to be otherwise.

'I had a French governess. Ah, how clever she was ! Clever with the wicked cleverness that often for a long time deceives good simple-minded people. Madame Barvillier was the daughter of emigrants who had taken refuge in England during the Reign of Terror, and the widow of a fellow-exile. She was nearly fifty years of age when she became my instructress ; but a halo of romance still lingered about her, and I well remember the respect and delicate kindness with which she was treated in our family. My father took a lively interest in the stories she had to tell of the *ancien régime* ; and my mother, believing her to be a woman of sincere piety, respected her accordingly. In reality she was only an artful hypocrite.

'As for me, she charmed me from the first, as I now know, by her subtle, implied flatteries, her caressing manners, and her seeming sympathy with youthful emotions, hopes, and aspirations. Though in all wise ways most tenderly cared for, I had not been a spoilt and petted child. Indeed, in those days, children were kept far more in the background than they are at present ; and there was a stately dignity about my parents quite opposed to the impulsive, demonstrative manner which so bewitched me.

'I was very fond of drawing and painting ; most girls are, I think, if in childhood they have had enough good instruction to smooth away the first difficulties, and give a little mechanical dexterity to the hand. Absolutely, I could so far sketch from nature, that a view which included a profile of our parish church, and the vista of an elm-tree avenue that led to our house, was recognised by my mother at a glance'—

'And praised ?' added Lotty with a smile. 'As an only daughter so excellent, I should have expected raptures of admiration.'

'Then you would have been greatly disappointed,' resumed Lady Elderton.

'I never met with raptures of admiration till I listened to the false and artful woman who led me by her flatteries to the brink of a precipice. Madame Barvillier did pretend to think that I had a genius for painting—it answered her purpose to encourage my taste for it—especially to encourage out-of-door sketching. Young people with mental

activity are very apt to take up one pursuit after another with a sort of feverish eagerness ; but it is a mistake to fancy such eagerness is a sign of special genius. I am inclined to think that great and special genius works more quietly and silently ; with incredible rapidity, it may be, but altogether without spasm. No, my dears, I assure you the world has nothing to regret in my not having touched a brush these forty years.

'My passion for sketching was the material Madame Barvillier had to work upon. One day, in our search for the picturesque, we wandered beyond the park gates, a thing not actually prohibited by my mother, yet one I knew she did not altogether approve. However, I was under the guidance of my governess, who tempted me by the account of a lovely bit of scenery lately opened out by the felling of some trees—just in my style to paint, she declared—and so she lured me on to the outskirts of a neighbouring wood, where, dismissing the servant who had carried my portfolio and the camp-stools, she settled herself to her embroidery, and I began cutting my pencil. Madame chattered away, as was her wont, certainly in pure Parisian French, which I by this time understood perfectly, and spoke with a certain fluency ; but I have often remembered how apt she was to glide out of educational discourse into little romantic histories in which some grand chevalier was sure to figure. Not, however, that she did so on this occasion ; on the contrary, she talked learnedly about moths and butterflies, and, considering the subject, was quite ponderous in her erudition.

'It certainly was a pretty view she had tempted me to sketch, and the golden light of a still August afternoon—just such as that of to-day has been—lent its charm to the scene. As I sketched the outline of a range of hills, I wondered, when I came to lay on my colours, how nearly I could produce the soft haze which veiled, without obscuring, objects, and marvelled at the spell which I knew a really great water-colour painter might have exercised.

'Suddenly there emerged from among the trees a young man bearing a pedestrian's knapsack. Long afterwards, I remembered, what I never noticed at the time, that he was by no means dusty or travel-stained, though he professed to have walked twenty-five miles that day ; for he stated that circumstance when he apologised to Madame for addressing her, saying that he had quite lost his way, and begging for information as to his whereabouts. Madame responded in very broken English, which, after a few words, glided into French, in which language the stranger responded fluently. There was a start, an apparently sudden recognition between the two, and Madame, turning to me, begged leave to present her friend, Monsieur the Duc d'Alton.

'What could I do but receive his salutations ? He had the bearing of a gentleman, and seemed the intimate acquaintance of my governess. His present position was easily explained. He had been so long in England that he had acquired many English tastes, and he was now performing that thoroughly English feat, a pedestrian tour. Midland English scenery was his adoration—landscape-painting his craze. Might he be permitted to look at my drawing ? Would Madame suffer him to sit beside her?—the stump of a tree was conveniently

near. How favoured a land was England! How richly endowed were all English women! Questions and phrases such as these were poured out with emphasis and volubility; and something I gathered about the Muses and Graces being fairy godmothers who must have presided at my christening—this piece of pagan adulation being addressed in a loud whisper to my governess.

‘Of course Monsieur le Duc was enraptured with my drawing, and *apropos* of those bare outlines, talked learnedly of Poussin and Claude Lorraine. For the first time in my life, I felt treated not only as a grown-up young lady, but as a personage distinguished from the throng by her natural gifts. My cheeks flushed, my voice trembled, and, inflated by gratified vanity, I had not good sense enough for ballast to keep my mind steady. Looking back to that scene as it shews in the sober light of memory, I seem to myself to have been featherheaded as a shuttcock, and a girl whom only God’s special providence snatched away in His good time from being the plaything of those people.

‘It was a curious coincidence that the Frenchman found himself obliged to take up his knapsack and walk on towards the village inn to which Madame had directed him, just ten minutes before Gibson, the trusty old servant, who was a pattern of punctuality, came by appointment to carry back my portfolio and the camp-stools. But there were a good many singular coincidences within the next fortnight, which did not explain themselves till afterwards.

‘As we walked home, Madame Barvillier narrated for my edification the romantic history of her newly discovered friend. Utterly unreal and highly improbable as were the details with which she indulged me, I could not recall them to mind even if I would; but I know that the general impression left on my mind was that the Duc d’Alton was a peer of France, yet, for some reason or other, he was a political exile, travelling under an assumed name. If restored to the inheritance of which he had been defrauded, he would be rich beyond the dreams of a Croesus—Madame was fond of classical illustrations and allusions—meanwhile, he had a little mine of wealth in old family jewels, which, happily, he had secreted and brought to England with him. She told me all this, she said, because she loved me, because I exercised a spell over people by my truth and ingenuous confidence, and veritably she could not hide things from me; but on no account must I reveal to any human being—no, not even to the *chère Maman*—that we had met any one out of doors, or that she, Madame Barvillier, had any acquaintance with the Duc d’Alton. The most fatal, the most terrible events would occur, were I to betray his whereabouts; and here to-day, he would be gone to-morrow; and there could be no possible harm in my keeping silence; nay, had I not better try to forget the occurrences of that afternoon altogether!

‘Very subtly put was that recommendation to forget, as if forgetfulness were possible. But the boldest part of the scheme which was being carried out was the trading on my ignorance of life, and ignorance of passing events and current history. Charles X. was at this time seated on the throne of France, and, to all appearance, securely, and yet here was supposed to be an exiled royalist playing at hide-and-seek. Yet she told her vague, complicated, romantic history so well, that I positively believed a word from my lips would be enough to

surround this handsome, clever, ill-used man—who who admired my drawing so much—with the myrmidons of a foreign government, who would drag him to a dungeon, and perhaps thence to the scaffold! Of course I had read of the horrors of the French Revolution, though modern history was, for the most part, but meagrely taught to girls in those days, and my notions were altogether crude and inaccurate.

‘Before we reached the hall-door, I had given the promise that Madame Barvillier had required, and not conscious as yet of the bondage to which I was submitting, the strongest feeling I remember was one of gratified vanity and personal importance.

‘The next day shone forth just such a one as its predecessor, and there could not be a doubt as to the expediency of proceeding with my sketch. Accordingly, at the same hour, and under precisely similar circumstances, we proceeded to the wood; and while I arranged my portfolio and pencils, Madame again drew forth her thimble and scissors, and unrolled her strip of embroidery.

‘She had said that the “illustrious exile” would be gone on the morrow, therefore it was with real astonishment that I recognised his advancing figure before I had been settled at my task a quarter of an hour. Madame acted surprise in the cleverest manner; and he explained the change in his plans, by declaring that he had found letters at the post-office which made it desirable that he should remain in that locality for another day or two. As such was the case, he was determined to employ the time in sketching—and as it was from this spot the loveliest view was to be obtained—he hoped he should not be considered a trespasser, an intruder, if he lingered near us. He did not dare to emulate my skill, he said, or to attempt anything beyond such small pencil-sketches as might serve to remind him of this beautiful spot—and—and of the ineffaceable recollections associated with it.

‘Again, however, he departed before trusty old Gibson came for the sketching equipments, and I returned home, more inflated by self-importance than I had been even on the previous day.

‘O grandmamma,’ interrupted Charlotte Dudley, ‘I don’t think you are doing yourself justice. I don’t believe you were ever inflated with vanity—dignified, perhaps, you were, even at seventeen.’

‘Thank you, my dear Lotty, for your good opinion; but I assure you I am giving you what I believe would have been a true description of my state of mind; though I do not think I need proceed with every minute detail of my girlish folly and wrong-doing. Under the guidance of my traitorous governess, I met the young Frenchman day after day. Soon he assured me that it was my presence which detained him in the neighbourhood. Then he presented me with verses, written, he said, in my honour—all copied, as I afterwards discovered, from such French writers as Madame Barvillier knew I had never read. The next move was to implore my acceptance, as a *souvenir*, of a ring, apparently an emerald as large as a sapphire, and which had belonged to his mother, he said—its original possessor having been the unhappy Maria Lesinski, wife of Louis XV. For a long while I resisted this entreaty; the jewel seemed so valuable; and besides, it would be necessary to retain it secretly, as a matter of course. When at last I complied, he assumed a heroic attitude, and poured

out a torrent of adoration, calling me his love, his life, the star of his destiny—in short, his affianced wife.

‘For this I was certainly not prepared, and I believe I shewed on the occasion a little more “dignity” than had been expected from me. Nevertheless, the man had fascinated me; and I know not to what depths of imprudence I might have been lured, had not some small circumstance aroused the suspicion of faithful old Gibson, who took upon himself to tell my father all he had discovered.’

‘Can I ever forget the morning when I was sent for, and confronted with Madame Barvillier, who had been summoned from the school-room half an hour previously, and forbidden to leave the library till I had been questioned in her presence! My dear mother, who alone was seated, seemed drowned in tears; while my father, white with anger, white with the suppressed passion of a man accustomed to exercise self-control, stood leaning on both hands at one end of a long table; while Madame Barvillier, at the other end, knelt on a footstool—on which, perhaps, she had dropped for some sort of support, rather than exactly in supplication.’

‘I was arraigned, and pleaded guilty to the charge of meeting secretly and holding converse with a stranger, and of deliberately concealing from my parents every transaction connected with the acquaintanceship. Good old Gibson had already been my counsel for the defence, and, as I long afterwards discovered, had pleaded every extenuating circumstance, which, after all, could be only one—namely, that I had acted by the advice of my governess.’

‘I was ordered to fetch the verses which had so turned my head; and I did so, carrying them in a little blue silk bag in which I had kept them. At the bottom of the bag was the ring; and when my father drew it forth, I covered my face with my hands, and wept for very shame.’

‘What is this?’ said my father. ‘Be pleased to explain.’

‘To my surprise, Madame was silent. I wondered that she left me to narrate the history of the precious jewel. But hardly had I mentioned the royal lady who was said to have once possessed it, than my father burst into a bitter laugh; and carrying the ring nearer to the window, he gazed at it for half a minute; then, by sheer strength, his fingers snapped it in two, as he exclaimed: “Base metal and green glass!” I see there was really a plot. Daughter, ask your mother to pardon you; and lead her away, while I deal with this woman.’

‘I felt I did not dare to touch my mother’s hand; but ever obedient to my father’s slightest wish, she instantly rose; and I, holding open the door for her to pass, then mutely followed her out of the room.’

‘When we were alone, I sat down penitently and poured out the whole story of my regret and shame. So little given to demonstration as my mother herself was, I think my vehemence almost frightened her. But I know that at last she yielded to my entreaty, and putting her hand lightly on my shoulder, kissed me on my forehead. But though that kiss of forgiveness soothed my sorrow, peace and self-reconciliation were long in coming. Nor did my father ratify his forgiveness quite so speedily as my mother had done. Those were bitter nights, when I was dismissed by him without the

accustomed benediction—and mournful days, when I received only a frigid morning recognition.

‘As for Madame Barvillier—she was allowed one hour to pack up, and then a post-chaise conveyed her to the next town. What became of her and her associate, the pretended duke, I never knew with any degree of certainty. But twenty years later there was a *cause célèbre*, in which an old Frenchwoman appeared and a foreigner, accused of swindling and forgery, the description of whom singularly tallied with that of the impostor in question.’

There was a pause; and it was Mrs Dudley who broke the silence, saying, with evident emotion: ‘Mother, it was kind and generous of you to give the girls the benefit of this story. Once you told it me in my girlhood, and I think it was like a chart laid down, that warned me from listening to flattery, or indulging idle dreams about romantic admirers. But the strange thing is, that you are now the last person in the world that could have been thought guilty of an imprudence even in early youth.’

‘That is,’ replied Lady Elderton, ‘because I was blessed in my surroundings—blessed with parents who shewed me how to profit by the sharp lesson I had learned. Yet do not think I have not paid some penalty, if only in the painful associations which often arise. I gave up painting early in life, because the occupation constantly recalled scenes I wished to forget. As for emeralds—pieces of green glass, perhaps—they glare at me even across a room, as if in their verdant beauty they were the eyes of a snake.’

‘But surely, dear mother, you have had a happy life,’ said Mrs Dudley tenderly—‘happy, at least, for many, many years?’ she added.

‘I was supremely happy in my married life,’ returned Lady Elderton; ‘and my story would be incomplete, if I did not try to contrast the true love of an honourable man with the deceptive flatteries of an unprincipled fortune-hunter. It may be taken as a golden rule, that no lover means well who prompts a young girl to concealment, or seeks to load her with the ever-increasing burden of a clandestine engagement. Poets and novelists have much to answer for in so often making what they call love paramount, something to be indulged, and its blind impulses obeyed, before simple old-fashioned duties. Yet the greatest poets do not sin thus. Shakespeare knew better than to reconcile the Montagues and Capulets while their children lived. And the Moor might have trusted Desdemona till Iago was unmasked, had not Othello remembered that she had deceived her father—though it was for him. Oh, that young people would but believe that their elders do not necessarily forget the emotions and temptations of youth, when they offer advice that is contrary to youthful impulse!’

‘Ah, you don’t forget!’ murmured Lotty.

‘No; I do not,’ continued Lady Elderton; ‘and yet I declare that a breath of mystery about a young girl’s affections dims their purity—impairs all her chances of happiness. Nay, there is no happiness in married life, except where a man leads a woman onwards and upwards; and how can he do this, if he has not himself a true soul! How can he teach her to be strong and faithful, and to walk aright through all the slippery paths of life—if he has previously taught her error, and

been her tempter—if he has offered her the false jewel of his pretended love, and in requital of her acceptance, has robbed her of her sincerity!

Lady Elderton had warmed with her theme, and her last sentences had been spoken with real pathos. Her summer evening tale had been told and commented on, leaving a deep impression on the auditors. The twilight had by this time deepened into night, and light clouds obscured the moon. Presently, the clock struck; then Lotty rang the bell for the servants to assemble, and Mrs Dudley rose from her couch to conduct the family devotions.

It was midnight, and the house was so utterly still that the ticking of the hall-clock alone broke upon the silence; save in a large bedchamber, where two white beds remained as yet unpressed by Charlotte and Isabel Dudley. The two girls were in their loose wrappers, with their long hair plaited and arranged for the night, just as their maid had left them, so far as the toilet was concerned, but both were weeping, and Isabel was in an attitude of dejection and shame.

'It is a relief, Lotty, to have told you,' exclaimed Isabel; 'but oh! I am wretched and ashamed. Can it—can it be that grandmamma has noticed or suspected something, and so told her own story to-night—every word of which touched my heart as an accusation? Can she have read *his* intentions—and suspected *my* folly?'

'I cannot tell,' replied her sister. 'But, Isabel, if you are wise, you will confess everything to grandmamma, and ask her guidance.'

'I will—I promise you I will.'

'Then do it at once,' returned Lotty. 'Often she sits reading far into the night. Let me look if the light is shining from her room—it always shews beneath the door.'

'Oh, surely she is asleep by this time.'

'At anyrate, let me ascertain if it be so,' resumed Lotty, opening the door gently. 'Yes; I see the light; she is still up. Go now—go while you have the resolution.'

Thus strengthened by sisterly sympathy and good counsel, Isabel knocked at Lady Elderton's door, and was promptly admitted. No room in the house was better known to her than that bedchamber, yet, to-night, its adornments impressed Isabel in a manner they had never done before. Her grandfather's sword and epaulets hung on the wall, with many memorials to his fame and honour; his portrait looked down upon the scene; while the widow, majestic in her age, and serene in her sorrow, sat with her gray hair floating over her shoulders, and an open Bible before her. Serene she was in the sorrow of her widowhood, but to-night there was a trouble on her face—a trouble arising from her belief that Isabel was entangling herself in a mystery.

Yes, but a mystery that is not to be explained, since at that midnight hour, in that sacred chamber, a full confession was made, and a foolish letter, sealed and stamped quite ready for the post, was burned unread—burnt, together with the letter, something worse than foolish, which had drawn it forth. Was it singing-master, or handsome penniless ne'er-do-well acquaintance, or military partner at a ball, who had been seeking surreptitiously the hand of Isabel Dudley, co-heiress of a large property, but under age, and very inexperienced of the

world and its evil ways? I shall not tell. Such schemers' plans are singularly alike, though always with a difference. It is enough that Isabel Dudley had strength given her to shake off a brief infatuation. Travel, and reading, and cultivated society, during the next year or two, enlarged her mind, and quickened her intellectual faculties, so that her standard of excellence was altogether heightened.

There is a rumour that both sisters are engaged to be married—to suitors perfectly approved by their parents. Perhaps 'romantic' young people may say: 'Approved because they are men of wealth and position.' But that is not the chief 'because;' though, principles being good, and characters being sympathetic, it is no mean guarantee for happiness that married people are of the same rank in life, have had similar associations, and, in fact, have lived during their early life in a similar social atmosphere. And perhaps unfortunate marriages would sometimes be prevented, if elder friends and relatives spoke sympathetically to the young while yet there was time to retrace a false step; or if they emulated the self-sacrifice of Lady Elderton, when, to 'point a moral,' she related the story of her own girlish folly.

ANECDOTES OF ANIMALS.

Of all that occupies the attention of the naturalist, there is nothing more interesting than the study of the habits of animals, their various instincts, and the intelligence which they display. Anecdotes, perfectly well authenticated, concerning dogs and elephants, sufficiently attest their intelligence; and any one who keeps a dog, and watches its behaviour with attention, will soon see enough to remove all doubt on the point. But many animals, as well as dogs and elephants, exhibit similar proofs of intelligence, although not perhaps in equal degree. We propose now to relate a few anecdotes illustrative of intelligence in animals of different kinds, most of them from personal observation, one or two as communicated to us by persons whose testimony we could not but unhesitatingly accept.

A small menagerie exhibited at a fair in a village in Ayrshire was much crowded with visitors. Amongst the animals was a brown bear, not shut up in a cage, but fastened by a chain in a corner of the area, which was fenced off by a slight rail, that people might not go too near him. A woman who was there with a basket, selling gingerbread, however, went so near, that Bruin, putting forth his huge paw, clutched the basket, which he quickly drew from her hand, emptying most of its contents upon the ground within the space allotted to himself. She began to make some attempt to recover her gingerbread, but the animal, offering no violent resistance, quietly lay down upon it, and then proceeded to draw it forth piece by piece, and to eat it at his leisure. Something of reason was surely displayed by the bear, in adopting this method to secure possession of the gingerbread.

A farmer in Renfrewshire had a horse which

not only discovered how to slip its head from the halter by which it was fastened in the stable, but how to lift the latch of the stable-door, open the door, and get out, when at any time the door was left unlocked. This trick was often repeated. A similar story, we believe, is told of other horses, and probably with truth in every case. We have no doubt of the truth of it in the case now mentioned.

Cats are quite as clever in the act of opening latches when it suits their purpose. A family in one of the northern outskirts of London were a good deal annoyed with the frequent robbery of their larder, a small outhouse behind their dwelling. Legs of lamb and other articles were devoured or carried off, and no one could tell how. The theft was a mystery. One of the servants determined to discover the delinquent. She accordingly watched, and one night found that the thieves were a set of cats belonging to the neighbourhood. The larder had a latch which had to be pressed down in opening the door. No cat could properly press it down by springing from the ground. There was, however, an adjoining wall, from which cats might leap and risk the depression of the latch as they successively passed. This was what they did: they leaped from the wall one after the other, each trying to depress the latch as it passed, until one cat more fortunate than the others made the needful depression with its paw. The door immediately was opened, and a leg of mutton, which had been the object of siege, was secured, and eaten all but the bones. Was there not much sagacious planning in this piece of robbery by cats? We think there was—almost as much as we see demonstrated in some of the meaner departments of the human species. The incident took place lately.

Many are aware, from their own observation, how familiar horses become with particular roads and localities; so that, if left to their own choice, they will take the road to which they are best accustomed, or which leads to a well-furnished stable, in preference to another; and it is also very easy to note that they often proceed with much more apparent alacrity in going home than when going away from home. But the memory of the horse is more tenacious than is commonly supposed. A gentleman having on one occasion travelled along a certain road at a considerable distance from home, turned off it to pay a short visit to a friend, at whose hospitable abode his horse found rest and refreshment as well as himself. Riding along the same road about a year after, he wished to see if the horse retained any recollection of the place and occurrence, and when he came near where the road to his friend's house branched off from the main road, he let the reins fall loosely on the horse's neck. Presently, the animal pricked up his ears, quickened his pace, and on coming to the side-road, unhesitatingly turned into it, instead of going straight on.

'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,' says the prophet Isaiah. We have not had much opportunity of observation as to the ass, although we are inclined to believe that it is far from being a stupid animal, and is at least equal in intelligence to the horse; but often have we observed that both the ox and the horse soon get well acquainted with those who attend to their

wants and shew them kindness. Well also do they know the place where they are fed, and the time when a supply of food may be expected. If you see the farmer's cart on a winter-day at the gate of the field where the sheep or cattle require supplies of hay, because the ground is covered with snow, and hard-bound by frost, you will see also the animals congregating towards the place where it is usually distributed. When the hour is near for cows to be brought home to be milked and fed, they very generally are to be seen waiting near the gate of the field, or, if not, they are ready to come at the accustomed call. The horse whinnies in recognition when his master enters the stable and probably to express his desire for a little corn. He knows well what is likely to come when the corn-chest is opened, and further whinnying signifies his approbation and eager expectation. Similar things may be observed in many other animals. The pet lamb knows as well where the bread is kept as any of the shepherd's family. We remember a goat, which, being commonly kept chained in an outhouse, to prevent him from destroying shrubs and flowers, was accustomed, whenever he could break loose, to rush into the kitchen, and in all haste to the press where the oatcake was to be found, that being a luxury in which he delighted. The gruntings of the hog, when a footstep comes near the sty, are as certainly a begging for food as the sitting up of a dog upon his haunches; the approach of footsteps having become associated with the idea of a replenishment of the trough, or an agreeable donation of cabbage-blades. Poultry know the call that invites them to come and be fed, as well as their own chickens do the cluck by which the mother-hen announces that she has found something for them to eat. In the one case, we have an instance, apparently, of instinct; but the other is evidently very different, an instance of something learned and acquired in the state of domestication.

Many instances have been recorded of the display of intelligence by rats, to which we beg leave to add the following. A farmer's wife in the west of Scotland remarked that the cream on the surface of the milk in her dairy was often interfered with. At first, she suspected that some of her children had taken the unwarrantable liberty of dipping pieces of bread in it, but she could find nothing to confirm this suspicion; and by-and-by she noticed strange little streaks of cream on the edges of the milk-basins, as if a string had been dipped in and drawn out, so as to leave a mark. At last she discovered the secret. The cream was stolen by rats, which got upon the edges of the earthenware basins containing the milk, and not being able to reach down to it, a depth of several inches, nor daring to attempt to go down, as they could never have climbed up the smooth surface again, dipped in the tips of their long tails, drew them up loaded with the rich cream, and licked them. An arrangement of the basins, such that the rats could not get upon the edges of them, put an end to all further depredations of this kind. There was surely something more than instinct in this case in the procedure of the rats.

We have something still to tell regarding the ingenuity of rats. A family in a country-house in Hertfordshire had a fancy for rearing ducks, but could not well do so on account of rats, which

systematically got hold of and carried away the young ducklings, even from close to their mother. With a view to circumvent the rats, the maternal duck and her young were housed for the night under a coop, which admitted of no opening for the furtive intruders. The rats were not to be so easily cheated of their prey. On discovering that the mother-duck and her family were closely shrouded from intrusion, they devised a pretty plan of engineering, which was eminently successful. In the course of a single night they excavated a tunnel, going below the outer edge of the coop to its interior, and thus very neatly, without producing any alarm, stole every duckling from under the guardianship of the mother.

Two rats belonging to the same colony performed a feat quite as ingenious. A trap which was baited for their capture, was habitually plundered without securing a single rat. They had evidently invented some plan for safely stealing away the bait, and what the plan was could only be learned by setting a watch on the trap. We shall explain how the theft was effected. The trap was of the kind which is sometimes employed for catching mice. It was a box with a sliding door, which was sustained by mechanism connected with the bait. On the bait being nibbled at, the door descends and makes the mouse a prisoner. The two rats saw through the device, and resorted to the following very simple but effectual method to take away the bait, which was a piece of toasted cheese, and yet escape imprisonment. One of them placed itself under the door, so that it might fall on its back, while the other crept in and successfully carried off the morsel of cheese. The first rat then drew itself from under the door, and joined its companion. This demonstration of rat intelligence, like the preceding incident, is of recent occurrence.

Our next anecdote relates to an animal of a very different kind, a magpie. Amongst the poultry at a country-house in Renfrewshire was a turkey-hen, that preferred, as turkeys often do, to make her nest among bushes on the side of a *burn*, some three hundred yards from the house, rather than in the outhouse appropriated to the poultry. A magpie, chancing to be perched one day on a neighbouring tree, saw the turkey visit her nest, and pounced down on the newly laid egg as soon as the turkey had left it, proceeding without loss of time to make a hole in the shell, and extract a portion of its contents. From that day forth, the magpie was never absent from the vicinity of the nest about the hour of the forenoon when the turkey was accustomed to repair to it, but, seated on one or other of the trees, kept watch for the opportunity of so delicious a repast; so that it was found necessary to follow the turkey pretty closely in order to obtain her egg unbroken by the magpie's bill.

The last anecdote that we propose to tell concerns a trout. Few anecdotes have been told of the intelligence of fishes, and they do not generally get credit for much of it, nor do they probably possess much. Yet that they do possess some measure of it, appears from the well-known fact, that carp in ponds have learned to come at a certain signal to be fed, and something of the same kind has been observed of some kinds of sea-fish in a marine fish-pond. It would be worth while for any one who has an aquarium to direct his

attention to this subject, and to keep a record of his observations. Ours were made on a trout in a burn. Its place of abode was under a stone in a small pool, immediately below a wooden bridge, over which the path led from the house in which we resided to the garden. It was a pleasing amusement for boys to feed the trout with worms, which were readily to be procured in the garden; and the trout was fed accordingly, and soon learned to come out from below the stone, and seize the worm thrown into the pool, whatever number of spectators might be close at hand on the bridge, and although some of them might be a little noisy. But it was thought proper to try a trick upon the poor fish, and to present him with a very small long radish, instead of a worm. Out came the trout at once, the radish in shape and colour being pretty like a worm, and caught it ere it reached the bottom; but quickly spat it out again, and retreated to the shelter of the stone. Once or twice afterwards, the trick was successfully repeated; but the trout soon learned to distinguish a radish from a worm, and ceased to come out for the one, although prompt enough in coming for the other.

A WORD ABOUT TIMBER.

THOUGH iron ships are now so generally made, it is yet a subject of great consideration how to supply our dockyards with suitable material to be used in ship-fittings. In this country, where our forests are neither large nor numerous, the stout heart of oak is often replaced by the valuable teak from India, which is almost incorruptible, or the mahogany; whilst in France, the oak and the Riga pine are almost exclusively used; the first for the shell of the vessel, the panels, and side-planks; the second, for the masts. These kinds of wood are sold at a very high price, because they possess a homogeneous structure, and are without a flaw. To the oak must be added the fir, the pine, and the larch, as used for buildings. The pieces for timber-work are cut on the spot; this operation, by despoiling the trees of their bark and some of their sap, reduces their size, and makes their transport more easy. It is from the Vosges and Jura Mountains that the immense fir trunks come which are used for scaffolding.

When trees are intended to be cut up into planks, the work is usually done in the forests of the continent. The sawyer's work is separate from the wood-cutter's, and it is a long and tedious business to stand across the tree and saw from end to end by the help of a cord. In England, where the wood cannot conveniently be carried away to the saw-mill, small movable steam-mills are placed in different parts of the forest. Resinous woods, which are lighter and less difficult to carry than oak, are cut into logs of four or five yards in length, and taken to the mills, which are placed beside a stream of water not far from the forest. This business is carried on to a great extent in the Vosges Mountains; they run from south to north, parallel to the Rhine, opposite those of the Black Forest, their contemporaries in the age of creation; and being formed of granite, or a kind of red sandstone dry and pulverised, constitute a soil too poor for cereals, but admirably fitted for forest culture.

Wiser than the Swiss, the mountaineers of the Vosges avoid the mistake of denuding their peaks to transform them into pasture-grounds; they only

cultivate the valleys, preserving carefully the wooded portions, which are at the same time a source of wealth and a guarantee against the ravages of torrents. In the most mountainous parts of the chain around St Dié and Remiremont, the planks cut from the fir-trees are sent to all parts, and are so valuable, in a commercial point of view, as to make the fortunes of the country-people. Nothing can be more picturesque than the saw-mills which are met with at every step in these wooded valleys. A stream which turns the water-wheel; a cloud of blue smoke issuing from the hut of planks, and spreading over the dark foliage of the trees; the trunks of firs lying on the ground awaiting their turn to be cut; the dull regular creaking of the saw, give to these primitive workshops a peculiar charm. The most simple kind requires the small capital of a hundred and twenty pounds, and cuts thirty thousand planks annually; but there are others of a superior class, which turn several saws at once, and turn out more than a hundred thousand planks.

Almost all kinds of timber can be used for the second class of work. The oak gives us sleepers for railways; a kind of evergreen privet supplies the staves for barrels, laths, and joiner's wood of various forms; if grown in a coppice, it furnishes the poles for vines, and supports for the galleries in mines. It is valuable, and commands a high price, owing to the great number of uses to which it may be applied. The use of the beech is more restricted; it is wanted for collars, yokes, some parts of wheels, for wooden shoes, and the handles of tools. Since a mode of preserving wood from decay has been discovered, it has been substituted for oak as sleepers. The hornbeam is employed by preference for objects which have to support great pressure, such as the nuts of screws, catch-wheels, and vices; whilst the elm is used in general for ploughs. The ash, the maple, the birch, and the shrubs of holly and box, serve for the smaller trades, such as snuff-boxes in the Jura, musical instruments in Hungary, humming-tops in the Black Forest, and the knor in England, which ought only to be made of box-wood, as being the hardest, and least easy to split.

Most of these articles, if not entirely manufactured on the spot, are at least roughly moulded into shape, and afterwards handed over to the makers of ploughs, barrels, and other kinds of carpentering. The workmen employed are not, strictly speaking, wood-cutters, but come specially from a great distance, and are in general very well paid. It is the interest of those who buy the wood to employ really skilful persons, who know how to make a block go the farthest in economy, and do not waste the material. In some places, particularly in Alsace, where an immense quantity of wooden shoes are fabricated for exportation to America and Algeria, they have endeavoured to replace men's labour by that of the machine, which works more quickly and more regularly. This will soon be applied, in all probability, to many other branches of industry, so that the movable steam-engine will do as much for the work of the forest as it has already done for agriculture; whilst man, relieved by degrees from the hardest part of his work, will rise gradually from the rank of a serf to that of an intelligent being, who masters and guides at his will the natural forces which he has subjected.

The remainder of the tree which cannot be used for any better purpose is transformed into fire-wood, which is kept for a year before it is sent into the market, that it may lose its humidity. The resinous and white woods are not preferred for domestic use, as they burn very quickly, giving a clear flame; but for bakers and for lime-burners they are invaluable, as they so rapidly bring their furnaces to a high temperature. The branches that are too thin or too thick for fire-wood are generally converted into charcoal, which is made on the ground where the wood is cut. It is arranged in the form of a haystack, and covered with a layer of earth, within which the fire is lighted; the combustion goes on slowly, throwing out of the holes made in this kind of volcano thick columns of yellow smoke, which at a distance may easily be mistaken for a fire. In about eighteen days, the carbonisation is completed. It is in the neighbourhood of manufactories where charcoal is employed instead of coke, that this work goes on on a large scale, and it is necessary to conduct it with care, to avoid all loss.

These various works pass through the hands of a numerous population, whose existence is passed in the midst of the forests, and whose manners are little known. The woodman, properly so called, only cuts down the trees and prepares the fagots; he is often poor, but never abjectly so. Living in close proximity to his work, he is generally the possessor of a cottage, a strip of land which he and his family cultivate, and one or two cows, which graze in the woodland under the care of a child. During the summer, when work fails in his own department, he turns to harvesting, and can generally get employment, when hands are so much needed in the country. But the true wood-cutter is faithful to his own work, and is always ready at hand for those who buy the wood, never leaving it to seek a higher wage. He knows the place he has lived in from childhood, has followed all its transformations; each tree is a friend; some he has seen planted, others are waiting their arrival at maturity, when they will fall under his axe. By the form, height, and a thousand signs imperceptible to others, he uses them as infallible guides to find his way through the deepest shades.

On the other hand, the charcoal-burners and workers in wood go from forest to forest wherever their services are required. They set up their workshop in a kind of plank-shed, where they spend all the day; and for the night, they build cabins formed of slabs of wood covered with earth. Thus they pass six or eight months of the year in the depths of the forest, only going out on the Sunday to the nearest village, to renew their provision of meat and bread for the week. Formerly, they formed with the wood-cutters powerful brotherhoods, known under the name of 'Good Cousins of the Woods,' into which they were only admitted by certain ceremonies. They had mysterious signs, by which they recognised each other in every forest, kept themselves isolated from other societies, and seem to have spread over the Black Forest, the Alps, and the Jura Mountains. They made a point of performing kind offices on all occasions, and, in case of persecution, opened their forests as an inviolable asylum.

Wood is not, however, the only production of the forest; it gives us, besides, different important substances, the chief of which are bark, cork, and

resin. For the first of these, the oak, the birch, the alder, and the lime, are mostly used: the bark of the last is fibrous, flexible, and strong; it is made into mats, carpets, and ropes which resist damp better than those of tow. The bark of the other trees is employed for tanning skins; they contain a certain quantity of tannin, a kind of acid which, when in contact with animal gelatine, forms that insoluble and undecaying article called leather. The Russian leather, so well known for its peculiar odour, owes it to the employment of the bark of a very odoriferous willow. The French leather, which is considered superior to that of many other countries, is tanned with the best quality of oak-bark, and great pains is taken in the barking of the tree. It is only practised on those which are marked to be cut down; and when the spring sap has begun to rise in April or May, it can then be removed more easily, and contains more tannin. A ring is cut at the foot of the tree, and, with a sharp blade, the bark is marked into strips, which are afterwards torn from the top to the bottom; these are dried in the sun, and tied up in bundles for sale.

Cork, that light and elastic substance, the uses of which are so various, is also a bark. The layer develops itself under the epidermis of the cork-oak. This tree, which belongs to the region of the Mediterranean, is very abundant in Spain, Italy, the south of France, and Algeria, where it alone forms considerable forests. Up to the age of twelve years, the tree produces a hard, irregular, tough kind of cork, which can only be used for floats or buoys; but after this is carefully removed, a new layer forms itself, which, being no longer compressed by the epidermis, is regularly developed, and grows the true cork for bottles. In about ten years, it gains the necessary thickness, when it is cut round the trunk at the top and bottom, and, by vertical incisions, stripped off in planks, which are sent to market. The same operation is repeated every ten years; so that a single tree gives in a hundred and fifty years twelve or fourteen harvests, producing a revenue better than any land can afford to the owner.

Another forest production which does not yield in importance to those already mentioned, is resin. One of the places where it is largely drawn from the trees, is the immense plain situated in the south-west of France on the Gulf of Gascony. Thanks to its proverbial sterility, the name of Landes has been given to the department. Formed of pure sand, and resting on strata through which the rain cannot filter, the soil has for ages been considered unfit for culture. Burnt up in summer, and swamped in winter, it produced nothing but ferns, rushes, and heath, scarcely sufficient to feed some scanty flocks. In addition to these misfortunes, the country was threatened by an entire overflow of the sand from the downs on the coast. Immense heaps, thrown up by the waves over an extent of fifty leagues, advanced upon the land, blown in by the west wind. Gradually it buried fields and villages, surmounting all obstacles with desperate regularity; the country seemed to be devoted to destruction; when, at the close of the last century, M. Brémontier thought that these downs might be fixed in their places by planting pines. The plan succeeded beyond all hope; the moving sands were kept together by the roots, whilst the winds broke against the young trees.

The planting is still persevered in, and now covers about forty thousand acres.

This maritime pine produces a large quantity of resin, from which are manufactured turpentine and tar. The extraction of the resin has become a very lucrative trade; it is managed by means of longitudinal cuts the length of the tree, about an inch deep; the liquid which flows from the wound is caught in a jar placed at the foot, which the resin-collector removes each week at the same time that he reopens the slit. The operation does not seem to affect the growth of the tree when it is not bled more than twice a year; it diminishes the thickness of the yearly layers, but renders the wood more firm and resisting. If the pine be cut on all sides at once, it perishes in a few years, as they say it is bled to death. This is only done when the tree is shortly to be cut down; the others will live for a hundred, or a hundred and twenty years, and they are ready for the incisions at the age of twenty years.

There is yet another production which, in the course of years, may be hoped for in the forests of warmer climates than ours—that is, silk. A clever French entomologist has lately made great efforts to naturalise the *Bombyx cynthia*, or silkworm of the Japan varnish-tree. His perseverance seems likely to be crowned with success, as it has thriven in the open air in the Bois de Boulogne. The alanthus, or varnish-tree, whose leaf serves it for food, proves to be very hardy, and easily propagated; it grows in almost every soil, and vegetates under very unfavourable conditions, as those planted on the Boulevard des Italiens do not suffer from the subterranean emanations of gas or the dust of macadamised roads. It would suit well the mountains in the centre and south of France, and might become a source of great riches for the inhabitants. Whole forests of alanthus, peopled with silk-worms, spinning in freedom, and producing every year thousands of pounds of silk, with the single trouble of collecting the cocoons, would produce a revolution in our silk-markets, where high prices so long have ruled; but, of course, time and capital must be expended before this result is reached.

LADY LIVINGSTON'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER XVI.—A SAD CHAPTER.

MARRYING and giving in marriage certainly do occupy a larger proportion of feminine than of masculine thoughts, and it is natural, although the strong-minded sisterhood may object, that this should be so. Such, at anyrate, was the opinion of the Dowager Lady Livingston, who was rather inclined, than otherwise, to plume herself on her superior sagacity, when she wrote urgently to Oswald Charlton, all but entreating her late lord's nephew to resume his visits at the Fountains. The aged peeress was beginning to feel, and to resent, the truth, that there are things which money cannot buy, and she was the more angry because she desired nothing but to bring about the happiness of those who were dear to her. It is not only, according to Lamb's quaint saying, the round man alone, but sometimes the round woman as well, who finds herself roughly inserted in the three-

cornered hole. To have been the abbess of some highly privileged convent, a despotic queen-regnant, or a good fairy, able by the wave of her starry wand to bestow riches and felicity on the deserving, hunchbacks and rags on the bad, would have precisely suited her. And now, here was Beatrice, her darling Beatrice, strangely dear to the childless old woman, who had never schemed or laboured for the welfare of a daughter, pining and fading beneath her eyes, because she loved a man whom duty compelled her to abandon for another, whom she regarded with dislike and fear; for the sentiment which Dashwood now inspired in the object of his interested affections was akin to fear.

The dowager was angry with all concerned, but chiefly with herself. There was Beatrice, with her Quixotic code of honour, and her blind devotion to the wishes of her dead mother; there was Sir Frederick, grasping, greedy, callous, concealing the iron hand beneath the velvet glove; there, lastly, was Lady Livingston, self-convicted of having blundered sadly when she believed herself to be acting for the best. Had she not put forth all coaxing arts for the conciliation of the very man, who, of all others, was the likeliest to make her darling miserable! Had she not thrown Beatrice and her cousin together, confident in her own wisdom, and secure in the knowledge of her own ultimate resolves, and with what a result! She had merely riveted the chain that bound her young kinswoman to the disreputable baronet, and caused much unhappiness to the person from whom, if she could, she would most willingly have fenced off all the ills of life. She, therefore, eager to repair the errors of the past, wrote to Oswald Charlton to call him back to the Fountains.

Oswald could not choose but comply with this behest. He knew, or divined, what was the dowager's purpose in thus recalling him, and he instinctively felt that more of pain than pleasure was likely to accrue from such a renewal of his former intimacy. But the temptation was more than he could resist, and he came. As he passed the hall-door, the sound of singing met his ears, and he paused, listening, as some wayfarer in a South American forest might pause to hearken to the strange wild notes of some feathered minstrel as yet uncatalogued by the naturalists of Europe. A clear and powerful voice, exquisitely modulated, and managed with much skill, but yet unpleasing in the general effect which it produced upon an ear that was quick and sympathetic, such a voice as that of the mocking-bird, whose sweetest strains of borrowed music are apt to change abruptly into shrieks of anguish, and the despairing laughter of the Lost. There was no such violent transition in this instance, and it was not until the last cadence had died away, that Oswald looked his inquiry of the old butler at his elbow.

'Miss Beatrice's music-teacher, sir—a young person from London—comes twice a week, and mostly spends some time here,' said that steady functionary.

And when Oswald entered the well-known room, he found, in addition to the regular members of the family, a slight and elfish form, with colourless hair, and sallow face, and weird expression, not at all such as he should have connected with the chant which he had just overheard.

But it was not immediately that Charlton had leisure to observe so insignificant an individual as Aphy Larpent, the 'young person from London.' There was the dear, dear face, so often seen in dreams, so steadfastly enshrined in memory, somewhat paler and sadder than of old, but with the same pure prettiness of mould, the same look of trustful innocence. One glimpse he had of the love-light shining forth from Beatrice's eyes, and there was a delicious instant when he marked her sudden blush and start at his unexpected entry! But the drill of good society teaches us to subdue all outward manifestations of feeling, and Miss Fleming betrayed herself no more, save that her little hand was cold and trembling as it rested for a moment in his. The dowager was brisker and more genial than she had been of late, but she was careful not to say a word regarding her own prayer to her husband's nephew to resume his old intimacy at a house which he had of late learned to avoid. Lady Livingston's desire was to atone for the harm done by her former diplomacy, and she really, on this occasion, displayed the supreme tact which consists in letting things, to all appearance, alone. That is not the most expert coachman who squares his elbows obtrusively, and forces on the notice of all beholders what a painful and difficult task it is to drive. The fencer who flourishes his blade, and gives staccato beats with his blade, and cries *Ha! ha!* with the ferocity of a bloodthirsty Bobadil, is not always a match for the quiet swordsman who thrusts home at the unguarded moment.

Presently, the young person from London, who had to some extent ingratiated herself in the goodwill of the titled mistress of the Fountains, and was, as the butler had truly indicated, often pressed to remain as a guest after having executed her official duties as a teacher, went away; and Lady Livingston unostentatiously contrived that both Violet Maybrook and herself should quit the room, and that the lovers should be left alone together. It was for this that the dowager had asked Oswald to resume his visits at the house of his uncle's widow, and she purred with blameless satisfaction as she perceived the partial success of her simple stratagem. Violet fell, more than willingly, into her employer's arrangements. She would, herself, have given very much to have separated Dashwood's future fortunes from those of Miss Fleming, and her prompt prescience had warned her from the first that in this innocent girl she had encountered her most dangerous rival with the man whom, knowing and reading him as she did, she still loved so well.

The lovers were left alone. Who is there so cold and dull as not to remember when those few and simple words would have been as a foretaste

of Elysium, when the base earth, and the grovelling cares of sordid life, rolled away like the changing scenery of a theatre, and all was glorious, tender, almost divine, because of the one world-old story of loving, and being loved again! But there is a difference between the first thrilling emotion of new hopes, new interests, new joys, and the mere tremulous longing when some rigid barrier of honour or of faith arises to divide those who would gladly join their hands. So it was now. Beatrice looked timidly down, as if afraid that her eyes might betray her thoughts, and Charlton, too, was more embarrassed than is usual with members of his profession. It was for him to speak, however, and so he began, not taking refuge in general topics, but plunging at once into the only one which could have had a zest for those two. 'I have been a long time absent from the dear old house,' he said; 'you can guess why, Miss Fleming, unless I am much mistaken.'

'Yes!' she said softly, but as yet she did not look up, and he went on.

'I staid away for more reasons than one. I feared, for one thing, that my presence might give you needless annoyance—might remind you of hopes which were very likely presumptuous, but which, at any rate, were never to be realised. And then I could not come without pain to myself. Lady Livingston—dear, good, old soul—wrote to reproach me with neglecting her, and I had not the heart to stay away. But was it right that I should come here?'

'I am—that is, we are—very glad indeed to see you, Mr Charlton,' said Beatrice, with that beautiful hypocrisy which only a young girl, and an innocent one, can practise, transparent as it is, without its degenerating into affectation.

Oswald smiled somewhat sadly. 'Perhaps, for my own peace of mind, it is not right,' he said, as he rose from his chair and leaned against the corner of an old cabinet, richly inlaid in rare woods, and ivory, and mother-of-pearl, the work of some cunning Japanese artist of those far-off days when Japan was as a book bound and clasped against the intrusive West. 'But dearly as I may have to pay for the present pleasure of hearing the one voice, and of looking upon the one face, that to me are more than all the world, I am glad that I came.'

Miss Fleming's only answer was, that her head bent down a little lower, and that a flush of dainty pink suffused her pale cheek; and yet she was supremely happy for one short instant as she drank in those welcome words. She was not forgotten, then. She was loved still by the man whom, in her heart, she acknowledged as her own chosen one; and that sweet assurance did much to take away the smart of weeks and months of care and sorrow. But she did not speak; and after a while Oswald's voice again broke the silence.

'When I came to Richmond to-day,' he said, 'at my good aunt's invitation, I had schooled myself into believing that, even if the opportunity occurred, I should say nothing to you, Miss Fleming, which mere acquaintance, mere friendship, would not warrant. Here is the opportunity, and I cannot help, as you see, recurring to the past—cannot help expressing the anxiety which I feel as to your future. May I, without rudeness, ask if your cousin, Sir Frederick Dashwood, has been often here of late?'

'He comes sometimes—not very often. He was here two days ago,' replied Beatrice, with evident reluctance.

'And does he—forgive me if I presume on the memory of our former conversation to ask questions which only my deep interest in your welfare could excuse—press his suit, his claim, I would say?' rejoined Oswald.

'He spoke once, once only: it is some time since then,' answered Beatrice, in a faint, low voice.

'He perseveres, then, in forcing his addresses upon you, even in opposition to your own will?' said the young man; and there was a hard, metallic ring in his voice that made Beatrice, for the first time, lift her head in alarm and look Oswald in the face.

'You will not quarrel with him—not seek him out, I mean?' she said eagerly: 'that would be worse than all.'

Charlton laughed somewhat bitterly. 'No fear of that,' he replied; 'the days of chivalry are past, and gentlemen no longer break spears or cross swords because they love the same lady. I have no reasonable ground for differing with Sir Frederick Dashwood—so the world would say—because he would snatch from me the one flower that I would have for the pride of my own garden, for the joy and solace of my own life, merely—I know him—to crush it in his reckless grasp, and then to toss it aside to fade and wither! I only want to know what answer he received.'

'From me, you mean?' said Beatrice, sobbing.

'From yourself, dear Beatrice,' returned Charlton, as he approached her. 'I can imagine how he spoke and acted; but what was your reply?'

'That I must keep my word,' said Beatrice, as she looked up, and her truthful eyes, swimming in tears, met Oswald's; 'that I must keep it at any cost; that if he chose to take me, I was bound to submit; but that I could never, never care for him, never love him, if I wearied out a lifetime by his side! I even said'—She was silent, blushing deeply, and her eyes drooped; but her sudden change of colour, and her embarrassment, gave the young man a clue to her meaning, and he hastily exclaimed:

'That you did care for another! You told him that, and he was too mean, too heartless, to release you from this hateful compact, into which you had been so cruelly entrapped? Knowing what I know, by report, concerning this man, I cannot wonder that his ear should have been deaf to your appeal.'

'He was deaf to it,' said Beatrice despondently. 'I did not tell him in distinct words that I—that I valued another above him; but he understood me, and treated my poor little remonstrance as if it had been the wayward fancy of a child. Oh, it is hard, it is hard! but if he will have the fulfilment of my pledge, exacted by her who is gone, I can but yield. He said he would not be in a hurry to press his claim, so that it were but fully and fairly acknowledged as binding; and hitherto he has been so far merciful that he has said no more to me since then. But each morning the detested thought comes, cold and numbing as the touch of death, that he may speak, and that I am his slave, if he will have it so.' Her tears fell quick and heavily; and Oswald Charlton almost forgot the ruin of his own high hopes in unselfish pity for

her, so tender, young, and pure, thus doomed to vistas of misery far beyond her own imagining.

'Beatrice,' he said—'I may call you Beatrice, may I not?—we were always to be friends, you know, and I do but take a friend's privilege in caring for your happiness. Unless I do Sir Frederick Dashwood great injustice, it is the prospect of enjoying, as your husband, the use of Lady Livingston's ample inheritance, that makes him so resolute in asserting the rights over you which an evil fortune has given him. In your place, I would go to the dowager, tell her all, and—'

'I have told her everything already,' interrupted Beatrice, wringing her hands; 'but it was useless. I have begged and prayed of her to make me no heiress, since the very idea of her bounty had already allured the cupidity of one as ruthless as any vulture that ever flew screaming towards a prey. But she did but laugh, in her kind, wise way, telling me not to fret myself, since all would presently be well. She has tried, indeed, to reason me out of my belief that I am bound by my promise, made beside my mother's death-bed; but she was compelled to admit that I had the best of the argument. And, indeed, so I had. You, Oswald—I may call my friend so—you would not counsel me to perjure myself, or to break my word?'

'No, dear,' said Oswald hoarsely, as he drew his hand across his own eyes; 'I would not. That was a noble poet who penned those words:

I could not love thee, sweet, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

If ever you need a friend, remember you have one in Oswald Charlton, one who would give his life to save you from sorrow! But he will not, for his sake or yours, counsel you to break your spoken word.' He took her hand, and pressed it, and then, unable to trust his voice to utter more, walked from the room, and from the house. When Lady Livingston returned, she found that Oswald had gone back to London, that Beatrice was weeping in her room above, and that her pet scheme for bringing the young people together had turned out a total failure.

CHAPTER XVII.—AT PIRATE'S POST.

Bedford Row, on a bright bleak day, when spring sunshine went hand in hand with the searching blasts of an easterly wind, presented a cheerier aspect than it had done on that snowy afternoon of early winter which had witnessed Sir Frederick Dashwood's fruitless visit to Goodeve and Glegg. But the mechanism of the legal mill within doors went on working with its usual slow and smooth precision, and still the bones of litigants were ground to make the bread of the eminent practitioners whose names were dimly visible on the dingy doorposts. There, each at his desk, were the veteran clerks and the irreverent office-lads of oriental descent, and there, as before, was that pattern penman and discreet copyist, Mr Daniel Davis. The last-mentioned personage stood higher in the firm's regard than during the first months of his being numbered among the scribes in those Bedford Row offices. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he had risen in the opinion of his chief, the senior partner in Goodeve and Glegg's well-known house. Mr Goodeve himself had by no means raised himself, of late, in the eyes of his partner and his subordinates. Glegg

groaned over his sins of omission and the vacillating policy that threw so much of thankless toil upon the hardworked junior. It was now no secret in the office that Mr Goodeve's business capacities were not what they had been. 'The governor's going stale!' was a frequent comment among the boys who carried bagfuls of papers to and from the law-courts and taxing-masters'; and although the steady old clerks were too heedful of the commonweal to disparage their employer's intellect, they could not forbear from speaking to him on business topics in more peremptory style than they would have ventured to use a year or two before.

There are few positions more painful than that of a man dimly conscious of failing powers, and nervously anxious lest those with whom he deals should find out the weak joints in his harness. Small slights are magnified in his estimation, and the more so that he dares not resent them, for fear of betraying the feebleness that he would fain hide from himself, if he could. So it was with Mr Samuel Goodeve. Before the outside vulgar, he could yet keep up a show of fair seeming. The crass ignorance which every lawyer reckons on as the first attribute of a client, prevented his increasing mistakes from being made patent. But he knew that Glegg was beginning to humour him as though he were a child; while the managing clerks could not restrain their impatience when his memory proved deficient, as was often the case, in little matters of detail with which he had once been fully conversant. Davis alone treated him with the same grave and intelligent deference which he had from the first displayed, and it is not wonderful that Mr Goodeve should have learned to consider Davis as a very superior young man indeed, and to apply to him for help in moments when the routine of regular work was interrupted by some jarring of the machinery. And Davis, when thus consulted, was so admirable a coadjutor, never presuming on the trust reposed in him, suggesting rather than advising, and having the crowning art of making his own lucid thoughts appear as though they sprang, Minerva-like, from the bemuddled brain of the head of the firm!

The dark young clerk's services had been acknowledged, but not very substantially; his salary had been raised, but only by some poor half-crown a week; and Mr Glegg had protested stoutly against any such largess.

'You'll make every quill-driver of the lot discontented and envious,' such had been the remonstrance of the junior solicitor; 'and the end of it will be that we shall have to raise their wages all round. Make use of the fellow, if he's the paragon you say, but don't overpay him; and, if you'll allow me to interfere on such a point, Mr Goodeve, I'd not let him make so many cash out-goings on our behalf, or be quite so constant at the banker's counter, as I understand to have been the case lately.'

But on these subjects Mr Goodeve was confident of his own right to judge, and Daniel Davis continued to fetch and carry coin and cheques as before, and got to know a good deal of the arcana of the firm's business.

Office-hours were at length over on the day which had beheld Oswald Charlton's interview with Beatrice Fleming, and the clerks of Goodeve

and Glegg, some in company, and others alone, went on their several ways. Among these last was Daniel Davis, who, as usual, set his face westwards, and walked sturdily on, as if bound for Great Eldon Street and home. Not for long, however, since, plunging abruptly into a narrow court, where the daylight filtered down between high roofs and overhanging chimney-stacks, as into some ravine among the rocks, he left the roaring thoroughfare behind, and presently emerged into a network of slimy streets, where the tenacious London mud seemed perennially to cling to the slippery stones of the carriage-way, and where all the dwellings, and the shops, and the people looked distressingly alike. Daniel Davis must have known town well, or his former experiences of seafaring and a woodsman's life must have facilitated the results of his study of the map, since he struck out a course for himself, which, devious as it was, he followed without any sign of hesitation or of perplexity. It was not, however, until after a long spell of swift walking that he emerged from the grimy labyrinth of dismal streets, and was once more in one of the main arteries of London traffic. His face was set eastwards now, and that too at the hour when the tide of human beings was running strongly in the opposite direction, and when the City was fast being emptied of its fast but floating population.

An empty omnibus, creeping towards the deserted heart of the world's commerce, whence the black stream of busy life was ebbing so rapidly, was not hard to find, and Mr Daniel Davis thus journeyed on through famous streets where for generations fortunes had been made or marred, until at last the dilatory vehicle in which he was a passenger crossed London Bridge, and there set him down. He pulled down his hat over his brows, and pushed on, walking swiftly, as before, and still towards the east. It was not so easy, there, as he had found it on the Middlesex side of the Thames, to proceed by parallel routes, or to make circuits which should enable him, with some extra trouble and fatigue, to strike the main road at a point remote from that which he had already reached. Yet, whenever it was possible to do so, he avoided the principal thoroughfares, skirting blocks of ancient buildings huddled together, diving down unsavoury lanes, and gliding rapidly past the prison-like walls of monstrous factories, and grudging, to all appearance, no trouble, so that his progress should be unperceived. At last he found himself in a region where liquor saloons, shop-fronts full of cheap and tawdry wares, and the narrow doorways, blocked by stands of sunsketched portraits, of touting photographers, began to give way to emporiums still more markedly suburban, low-browed taverns, sheds where coals, greens, and potatoes were vended in picturesque confusion across the rough board that did duty for a counter, and constantly recurring marine store shops.

A queer district this, and not a very likely one in which a client of Messrs Goodeve and Glegg, solicitors with so distinguished a connection, might be expected to reside. There was an ancient and fish-like smell which pervaded the dusky alleys and crowded courts to left and right, and which was not dispelled even by the wholesome but pungent odours of heated tar and seething pitch from yonder boat-builder's yard, where hammering and calking were still going on in lively fashion,

though the toils of ordinary workmen seemed over for that day. A queer district, with decidedly a maritime and amphibious flavour about it, which yet lacked the racy smack of real sea-water. There were giant warehouses topped by towering cranes that looked as though nothing, not even the Tun of Heidelberg, could have been too weighty for the sway of their iron arms; and there were stores where masts and sails, booms and cordage, overflowed the buildings, and lumbered the inclosures behind the palings viciously studded with crooked nails, like hooks set to catch men.

It was not a spot to which to resort, surely, for purposes of pleasure, and yet, if Mr Daniel Davis was there on some errand of the firm's whose pay he drew, it must be confessed that he went about this business after a most peculiar and stealthy fashion.

Looking at his watch, he threw a quick upward glance at the fading sky, and then shook his head.

'I have made good speed,' he said; 'too good, and have time to spare.'

And without any further comment, he walked on, though in more leisurely style than before, stopping now and then, as if to make sure of some landmark or local indication.

'It ought to be hereabouts,' he said; 'but it is better to be certain on that head.'

Accordingly he made choice of a booth where potatoes, firewood, and modicums of coal were being vended by the glare of three unshaded gas-burners, and propounded two inquiries, to which the wooden-legged proprietor of the establishment readily rejoined.

'As for the Creek, master, it's right ahead of you; and if you bear up a little towards the star-board tack, you'll find the toll-bridge and the causeway for foot-walkers—the carts and carriages pass round t'other side of the church. And as for a decent public near the water, you can't do better than the *Anchor Fluke*, kept by an old shipmet of mine, in Rodney Row. Anybody'll shew it to you.'

Briefly thanking this communicative trafficker, Mr Davis, or, to give him his proper name, Bruce Larpent, proceeded to follow the directions which he had been given. Evening was now closing in, and that the more quickly for the dull damp fog that rose from marsh and pool along the river's shore, and hung, like a gray shroud worn breast-high, around the lounging groups that gathered, pipes in their mouths, and hands thrust into the pockets of loose monkey-jackets, made of coarse blue pilot-cloth, soddened by much exposure to weather, around the stone stairheads, of which the lowest steps were worn by the lapping of water, and discoloured by ooze and slime. Bright lights gleamed through the thin red curtains of upper rooms, wherein, to judge by the squeaking of fiddles and the stamping of feet, to say nothing of the various shadows that gyrated from window to window, dancing, perhaps not duly licensed by an enlightened magistracy, was going on. From these and other houses of entertainment came the clink of glasses and the chorus of sailors' songs, and shrill female objurgations or shriller laughter, and the deeper tones of men, some brawling, others loud in noisy good-humour. There were more men, more women, more children, abroad, since the first closing in of the darkness, than there had been before; and oyster-stalls, and orange-sellers, and

peripatetic purveyors of hot coffee, pies, welkls, and other creature comforts appeared to drive what was literally a roaring trade.

'This must be the Creek, and yonder is the foot-bridge, with its toll-bar, and collector in his white apron,' said Bruce Larpent, as he came to a halt. 'Now, where, I wonder, is Rodney Row?' Of the three first persons to whom he put this question, one, a woman, whose tangled hair hung loose beneath a battered bonnet, answered with a laugh of tipsy scorn; the second, a lad in tattered corduroy, made some jeering reply as he sidled off up an alley; and the third, a thoughtful-faced mechanic in paper cap and fustian vest, civilly deplored his inability, as a stranger to the district, and 'no just that long frae Aberdeen,' to impart the required information. But a gruff, old, rum-perfumed boatman, rolling past in his tarpaulin hat and loose mud-boots, gave a more satisfactory response to the appeal.

'I'm a-going thereabouts myself,' said this Triton of the Thames; 'so, if you walks along o' me, I'll shew you, from the corner, where the *Anchor Fluke* stands.'

He further, as they paced onwards, replied to another question of Bruce's as follows: 'Do I know Pirate's Post! Do I know my grandmother's best set of tea-things, when I see it! Why, I was born not a quarter of a mile off it; and all us chaps by the water, longshoremen and that, know the old rotten bit o' timber where Captain Kydd's second mate, or the bo'sen, I don't mind which, was hanged in chains after the lot of 'em had suffered at Execution Dock. Many's the time I've played, when I was a boy, near that rotten bit of old timber; but none of us, hark ye, would overly have cared to go there alone by night. 'Tis in a field, if you can call it a field now, where there's a lot of rusty steam-boilers and broken machinery lying about, a stone's throw from the *Anchor Fluke*, and you can see it, when the moon's up, from the door.'

It was a squalid district that they were traversing, and one not exempt from some risk to the belated wayfarer. At the mouth of lanes and courts that looked like caverns, and from within which re-sounded oaths, and ear-piercing whistles, and the sharp sound of catcalls, loitered several unwashed knots of lads and young men, some of whom laughed rudely as they stared the stranger in the face, while others swaggered forward, as if to dispute the passage of the foot-way. As the dark young clerk and his nautical Mentor passed by the largest of these gatherings, one of the company, a mere boy, made a quick dash at Bruce Larpent's silver watch-chain, a few links of which were visible through the lapels of his closely buttoned coat, at the same time uttering in shrill accents the well-known watchword of the London thieves. But Bruce, cool, strong, and active, caught the lad by the collar, and held him at arm's length, and there was something in his resolute aspect which deterred the seniors of the group from joining in the attack.

'I don't want to hurt you, my young friend,' he said, as the captive writhed and struggled; 'but we must have no more jokes of this sort, if you please;' while the old mariner broke in with: 'For shame, you young limb, you; I know your carroty head well enough, you Ste Jackson, and you'll never be worth your salt, on the cross or on

the square, you won't. Come, you clear off, since the gentleman's willing to take it as a lark; so no more of your nonsense!'

And the discomfited stripling, as soon as Bruce's hold relaxed, slunk back; while the others, one of whom muttered something about 'not worth while—regular game look—old Billy with him too,' offered no hindrance to Larpent's proceeding on his way.

'You see, sir, our people hereabouts are apt to be a little saucy with a stranger. Keep your temper, though, and your weather eye open at the same time, and, bless ye, you'll come to no hurt,' said the boatman, as they turned the corner. 'Now, my road lies down here; but you is Rodney Row, close to the river; and you'll find the *Anchor Fluke* at the end of it.'

Rodney Row was not, as Bruce saw it, a very cheerful place of residence, consisting as it did of four or five hovels, each standing in a garden, where a few cabbages were cultivated, behind palings made of the tarred staves of old casks; of a dismal warehouse, abutting on the river; of a disused factory, the tall chimney of which rose ghastly above the creeping fog; and of a large low building, from the windows of which a few lights glimmered, and which the explorer rightly guessed to be the oddly named hostelry of which he was in search. The *Anchor Fluke* proved to be one of those mouldering, rat-haunted public-houses that here and there crop up among the outskirts of what seafaring men describe as the Port of London. Once, it had probably done a flourishing business, when privateersmen, flushed with plunder, and men-of-war's crews eager to get rid of the pay and prize-money burning in their unthrifty pockets, had revelled in its dingy tap-room, and considered its frowsy garden, with the sunflowers and wooden images, a very Paradise of delights. Those days were gone, for there is a Fashion even among sailors ashore; and now the *Anchor Fluke* resembled some rotting hulk perishing at moorings in the muddy river hard by. Such as it was, however, the smoke-dried landlord (in red flannel jacket, hairy cap, and high sea-boots), and the one-eyed Hebe of the bar, were civil enough; and Bruce was inducted into the deserted coffee-room, and was served with the simple refreshments for which he had asked. He had no great appetite, however; and when the Dutch cheese and the ship's biscuits, and the pewter measure of frothing ale, had been placed upon the stained and rickety table at his elbow, he sat idly looking forth from the window, glancing up from time to time at the great yellow-faced clock, that ticked so loudly in the bar without, and the dial-plate of which was visible from where his chair was placed.

An hour went by in this manner, during which the darkness gradually increased, and the lights on board ship came twinkling out, one after another, until they were so numerous that it seemed as if they were wandering stars that had dropped, unextinguished, into the water; and the fog crawled higher and higher along the melancholy shore, and then the moon peeped out from between the bars of cloud that spanned the sky, and shone white through the gray mists of evening. With a sigh of relief, Bruce Larpent tossed off what was left of the ale, and rising, he paid for what he had consumed, and left the tavern without making any inquiry as to the direction which he should take.

'If Pirate's Post be as near as my talkative old friend asserted it to be,' said the young man, as he sallied forth, 'it will be no hard task to find its whereabouts for myself.'

And indeed, at no great distance, he discerned what looked at first like the carcasses of some primeval monsters, giant saurians left stranded on the tide-mud. Approaching, he could see that these were old boilers, corroded and worthless, until such time as a new baptism of fire should turn the rejuvenated metal into a molten stream, ready to take new shapes, and serve new uses. And beyond these rose a ragged stump of weather-stained timber, irregular in outline, hacked, chipped, and battered, but yet standing forth from the swampy soil in uncompromising endurance, like some huge tooth left alone in the midst of an otherwise denuded jaw.

'The Pirate's Post, I'll lay my life on it,' said Bruce, and he walked briskly towards it.

The white moon yielded but a weak and wavering light, and it was not until the young clerk had drawn very near, that he thought he could distinguish the outline of a human form leaning against the jagged pile, and seeming almost as if it were some grotesque image rudely carved by the tools of some semi-savage sculptor. Then, as Bruce came close up to the wooden pillar, the ungainly figure before him glided back a pace or so, wriggling its body and contorting its limbs as it did so.

'Is that you, Craney? But of course it is,' called out Larpent, half impatiently, but in a cautious under-tone. The twisting form came shambling towards him, not moving in a direct line, but crab-wise, and was soon distinctly visible. The white moonlight shewed the figure of a man of middle height, narrow in the chest, narrow in the forehead, hatchet-faced, but with high shoulders, limbs that were lean and loosely hung, and a neck so long and spare, that a single inspection of it served to explain whence its owner had derived the nickname by which Bruce had just addressed him.

'Yes, my noble sportsman; yes, my gallant captain; Craney it is, and no mistake!' said the long-necked man, bending his body as if he had been an actual eel, and rubbing his bony hands together. 'Was I the sort to keep a gentleman, and my benefactor too, kicking his heels in such a moist meeting-place as this!' Distressingly glib of speech was Craney, slurring over his words with the slippery fluency of one whom it was easy to fancy as presiding over a stock-in-trade consisting of a deal table, a pea, and three thimbles, and who at other times might be a plausible 'welsheer' on a racecourse, a seller of counterfeit sovereigns 'for a wager,' or even a voluble assistant at a mock auction-room.

'We are both of us, I believe, pretty punctual,' returned Bruce. 'And now to business. When last we met, I explained to you the nature of the job, and the kind of assistance I should require at your hands. Have you spoken to those former associates of yours of whom you told me, when we met?'

'When we met, indeed, my kind young gentleman! And what a blessed surprise it was to poor old Craney to see one whom he believed to be hundreds and thousands of miles away, here in the London streets; but the sight of you is indeed good for'—interrupted the man, in the wheedling tone that was habitual to him; but Larpent in turn cut short his discourse.

'Hark you, Craney,' he said; 'time is of value, and we may as well understand each other at once. You have a habit of spinning yarns, so confirmed, that I doubt if you know when you are sincere, and when your talk is mere palaver. But when we did meet by accident the other night, I saw genuine tears in those eyes of yours, and I do believe that you had a grateful sentiment towards the man who helped you out of an awkward scrape; for Captain Hayman uttered no vain threat when he swore to throw the stowaways overboard to drown; and I have known him do as much to a poor devil of a mulatto deck-hand, who fell ill from hard usage, and whom the skipper called a malingerer. You recollect?'

'Yes, I recollect,' said Craney, in a subdued voice, and with a shudder that was real enough. 'How could we help it, sir, we two poor starving shoeless creatures, Joe and self, lurking about the New Orleans quay; or how could we guess that the schooner we crept on board of after dark would turn out to be a craft of such a character, and commanded by such a wretch as that slaver captain! Why, Mr Larpent, but for you, we'd never have lived to go ashore again; but you did stand by us like a good one, and I'm not likely, bad as I am, to forget to whom I owe my life. If you want a proof, try me.'

'My good friend,' said Bruce, 'I ask nothing from you excepting silence and discretion. My name, which, save to yourself, is known but to one man in England, must be kept dark, you understand, whatever be the upshot of this affair?'

Craney nodded assent.

'And now,' pursued the young clerk, 'matters are ripe for action. Whatever can be readily converted into cash will be the well-earned recompense of the'—

'Of the operation, if you please, sir; we need not be too explicit,' chimed in Craney, rubbing his hands and ducking his head. 'Ah, sir, I had an education, as you have probably perceived, and didn't think, when I took prizes at school, I should ever take to my present profession for a livelihood; but that is an old story now. Would you like to see the Ugly One? He is here now.'

'Here? Where?' exclaimed Bruce Larpent, looking around in some surprise, for nothing was visible save the solitary stump of the old gibbet, and, a hundred yards away, the glimmering lights of the tavern.

'Not very far off, noble sportsman, my gallant sportsman!' said Craney, with a chuckle; and immediately afterwards the mewling cry of a cat, so accurately imitated that Bruce was himself for a moment deceived, resounded through the marshy meadow. At the third repetition of the cry the sound of oars was heard, and very soon a man came scrambling up the bank, dragging with him the chain of the small boat from which he had just emerged, and which he proceeded to fasten to an iron peg which he drove into the ground, and then, still stooping, drew near.

'All right, all fly, Craney?' hoarsely whispered the newcomer: 'this is our new companion, eh?'

The man, who was about thirty years of age, was short of stature, but with unusually broad shoulders, and a resolute low-browed face, somewhat akin in the massiveness of the jaw, and the bold stare of the round bloodshot eyes, to that of a peculiarly vicious bull-dog. He was clad in a

nondescript fashion, not uncommon among those who pick up a precarious living below bridge, his jacket of dark-blue Guernsey cloth, and bandana neckerchief, contrasting oddly with the coarse slop-clothes and nailed shoes and cap of brown woollen that completed his costume.

'There's a bunch of fives for you!' cried Craney, admiringly pointing to the extended digits of his friend. 'No deception there, sir, but an article equal, any day, to the clutch of an iron vice. You've a strong gripe, sir, as most seafaring gents have, but you'd hardly like to try squeeze for squeeze with my mate here. He can smash a Brazil nut with his fingers, and crack a coco on his head, the Ugly can! A better partner in his own line couldn't be.'

The subject of these commendations uttered an amicable growl, which was cut short by a sudden exclamation from his oratorical friend.

'Here it comes, flash-flash down the lane—a police bull's-eye, that is,' exclaimed the latter.—'Jump in, Ugly, and catch hold of the oars. I'm after you.—It would never do, sir, for us to be found here; but any time after four to-morrow we'll be at the *Birdcatchers' Arms*, Chelsea, the lot of us. The Philistines can't say anything to you; but with us 'tis different.' And without further ceremony, he followed his comrade into the boat, which instantly pushed off. The red gleam of the bull's-eye lantern came nearer and nearer, and as Larpet left the field, he encountered the policeman who carried it, and who took a long and steady survey of his personal appearance.

'This is but a queer neighbourhood,' he said civilly: 'be careful, sir, I advise you.'

The dark young clerk thanked him for the warning, and striding rapidly on, was soon lost in the shadow of the night.

ANECDOTE OF SYDNEY SMITH.—Lord Houghton, in his *Monographs Personal and Social*, just published, gives an amusing anecdote of the Rev. Sydney Smith, for the authenticity of which, he says, he will not vouch, but which seems to him good enough to be true. On being settled at his small living in Yorkshire, Sydney willingly assisted his neighbours in their clerical duties. On an occasion of this kind, 'he dined with the incumbent on the preceding Saturday, and the evening passed in great hilarity, the squire, by name Kershaw, being conspicuous for his loud enjoyment of the stranger's jokes. "I am very glad that I have amused you," said Mr Sydney Smith, at parting, "but you must not laugh at my sermon to-morrow." "I should hope I know the difference between here and at church," remarked the gentleman with sharpness. "I am not so sure of that," replied the visitor; "I'll bet you a guinea on it," said the squire. "Take you," replied the divine. Next day, the preacher ascended the steps of the pulpit apparently suffering from a severe cold, with his handkerchief to his face, and at once sneezed out the name Ker-shaw, several times in various intonations. This ingenious assumption of the readiness with which a man would recognise his own name in sounds imperceptible to the ears of others, proved accurate. The poor gentleman burst into a guffaw, to the scandal of the congregation; and the minister, after looking at him with stern reproach, proceeded with his discourse, and won the bet.'

WAITING.

Thou of the sunny head,
With lilies garlanded,
And bosom fairer than the blown sea-foam;
O Spring, in what waste desert dost thou stay
Whilst leaves await thy presence to unfold?
The branches of the lime with frost are gray,
And all imprisoned is the crocus' gold.
Come, sweet Enchantress, come!

Though, in the sombre west,
Thy star hath lit his crest—
Pale Phosphor, fronting full the withered moon—
Thy violets are sepulchred in snow,
Thy daisies twinkle never in the sun,
Rude winds throughout the ruined forests blow,
And silent is the dove's melodious moan:
Enchantress, hasten soon.

White are the country ways,
And white the tangled maze,
Loved of the oxlip and the creeping thyme;
Bare shakes the poplar on the sullen ridge,
Cold glooms the spectral mill above the flood;
Hoarse torrents stream beneath the ivied bridge,
And lightnings strike the darkness of the wood:
Enchantress, bless our clime.

No bloom of dewy morn,
No freshly blossomed thorn,
Gladdens the importunings of sad eyes;
The day wastes drearily, through cloud and sleet;
Over the watered meadows and stark vales
The night comes down impetuous and fleet,
And ships and cities shiver in the gales:
O fair Enchantress, rise.

Arise, and bring with thee
The rathe bud for the tree,
The healing sunshine for the trampled grass;
Loose tendrils for the boughs which bless the caves,
And shield the swallows in the rainy hours,
The pendent flames which the laburnum heaves,
And faint scents for the wind-stirred lilac flowers.
Enchantress, breathe and pass.

Men knew, and kissed, of old,
Thy garment's glittering fold—
Thy radiant footprint on the mead or waste;
Earth kindled at thine advent—altars burned,
And ringing cymbals bade the hearths be gay;
But now, in sunless solitudes inurned,
Thou leav'st the world unto reluctant day.
O haste, Enchantress, haste!

The larks shall sing again,
Between the sun and rain,
The brown bee through the flowered pastures roam,
There shall be music in the frozen woods
A gurgling carol in the rushing brook,
An odour in the half-unbosomed bud,
And dancing fox-gloves in each forest nook:
Then, come, Enchantress, come.

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